

LEXINGTON CELEBRATES WITH NEW TREES

By Anne Senning

Thirty-five trees have been planted on several major streets leading into the town center. Fourteen trees were installed on Massachusetts Avenue, three on Worthen Road, and eighteen on Waltham Street. Waverly Landscapers of Belmont installed all 35 trees, working in crews of three and four over a period a month.

This planting began with a mandate from 2008 Town Meeting, which funded a \$24,000 Tree Planting Appropriation to replace trees that had been removed throughout town in the past several years.

The 2008 Lexington Tree Inventory summer project located 79 potential planting areas for new trees on several major streets leading into the town center (and recorded over 1,300 of Lexington's public trees). Each street with possible planting areas was mapped in detail in the Planting Areas Report created by Clark University interns, Blaize Denfeld and Jonathan Penney.

The Tree Inventory project's goal was to locate potential areas where new street trees could be planted in an environment that maximized each tree's chance of survival while contributing to the beauty of Lexington and the health of its residents.

A planting area is a strip of land in the town right of way located in the 'grass strip' between the sidewalk and the curb of the street or in the town right of way located in a lawn where there is no sidewalk. It must be at least four feet (4') wide and four feet (4') long or longer and not under overhead wires.

In the fall, the Lexington Tree Committee used the Planting Areas Report to locate one of five species of street tree: Honeylocust 'Shademaster', Lacebark elm 'Dynasty', Silver linden 'Sterling Silver', Green ash 'Patmore', or London plane 'Bloodgood' in each of 35 locations.

David Pinsonneault, Lexington's Tree Warden reviewed and approved each site, making adjustments and marking each for review by Dig Safe®. Dig Safe® is a free service which assists excavators to comply with state law by notifying the appropriate utilities before digging. Member utilities respond to the work area and identify the location of underground facilities.

Once the sites had been cleared by Dig Safe® Waverly Landscapers were able to plant. They loaded the balled and burlaped trees that had been stockpiled at Westview Cemetery onto trailers. The crew chief worked from a copy of the Planting Areas Report, which gave him an address and told him what species of tree to plant. He then looked for a white stripe on the sidewalk placed by the Tree Warden.

The crew chief had his crew dig a tree hole with an auger attached to multipurpose construction machine. They then measured the depth of the planting hole to conform to the depth of the root ball. Two men removed the correct species of tree from the trailer using a large tree dolly to transport it from the trailer to the installation site. The planting hole was widened by shovel to accommodate the width of the root ball. Two men moved the tree off the dolly and into the planting hole. After observing the tree from various angles it was moved to a vertical position in the hole and dirt was added under one side or another to stabilize it. Then it was pushed down with their feet.

Once the tree was straight in the planting hole they removed the wire and twine that tied the burlap covering the root ball. In order to cut the lower wires, one man stood on the root ball, held the tree trunk and rocked it back, so that his partner could reach the lower wires on the opposite side. After the wires have been removed, the burlap covering was torn away. When the burlap was removed small amounts hydrogel (a substance that retains water and releases it slowly to the roots of the tree) and fertilizer was added to the root ball. The men prepared a dirt “saucer” around trunk with a diameter of about 4 feet. The saucer is designed to hold in rain and irrigation water and direct it towards the tree trunk during the first two seasons of its growth.

Then two stakes were driven into the soil on either side of the root ball. Soft nylon “ties” were fastened between the stakes and the trunk to hold the tree stable until its roots begin to grow. A green watering bag was placed around the tree trunk. This bag allows irrigation water to be released slowly through small holes in the bottom of the bag. You can recognize the trees from their stakes and watering bags around their trunks.

These 35 trees will grace the town’s streets for generations. To complete Town Meeting’s mandate, another 35 new trees will be planted in the spring, postponed because their species have a better survival rate if transplanted then.